

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following Listing of Claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims**

1. (Currently amended) A semiconductor surface protecting method whereby the circuit side of a semiconductor wafer is protected during the step of back side grinding of the wafer, comprising in order:

joining the circuit side of said semiconductor wafer to a polymeric film material via a fluid surface protecting layer ~~which hardens upon radiation exposure or heating,~~  
hardening said surface protecting layer, and  
grinding said wafer,  
wherein grinding said wafer is done after hardening said surface protecting layer.

2. (Currently amended) A semiconductor surface protecting method whereby the circuit side of a semiconductor wafer is protected during the step of back side grinding of the wafer, comprising:

providing a surface protecting sheet comprising a polymeric film material on which is a surface protecting layer, having a fluidizing temperature, and which is solid at room temperature, ~~becomes fluid upon heating and hardens upon exposure to radiation or upon heating to a temperature higher than the fluidizing temperature,~~

heating said surface protecting sheet to its fluidization temperature to make the surface protecting layer effectively fluid,

placing the circuit side of said semiconductor wafer in contact with the fluidized surface protecting layer,

hardening said surface protecting layer upon exposure to radiation or upon heating to a temperature of 100°C or greater, and  
grinding said wafer,

wherein grinding said wafer is done after hardening said surface protecting layer.

3. (Currently amended) ~~A The surface protecting sheet for protection of the circuit side of a semiconductor wafer during the step of back side grinding of the wafer, the surface protecting sheet comprising a polymeric film material on which is formed a surface protecting layer which is solid at room temperature, becomes fluid upon heating and hardens upon exposure to radiation or upon heating to a temperature higher than the fluidizing temperature used in a method according to claim 2.~~

4. (Original) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 3, wherein, before hardening of the surface protective layer, the protective layer has an elastic shear loss modulus ( $G''$ ) less than its elastic shear storage modulus ( $G'$ ) at room temperature (20-25°C) and an elastic shear loss modulus ( $G''$ ) greater than its elastic shear storage modulus ( $G'$ ) at 30-100°C, as measured with a viscoelasticity measuring apparatus at a frequency of 10 Hz, a deformation of 0.04% and a temperature ramp rate of 3°C/min., and the surface protective layer after hardening has an elastic tensile storage modulus ( $E'$ ) at 50°C greater than  $5 \times 10^7$  Pa as measured with a viscoelasticity measuring apparatus at a frequency of 1 Hz, a deformation of 0.04% and a temperature-ramp rate of 5°C/min.

5. (Previously Presented) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 3, wherein the surface protecting layer contains at least one type of a free-radical polymerizable compound having two or more ethylenically unsaturated moieties in the molecule, the free-radical polymerizable compounds being selected from the group consisting of:

(1) (meth)acrylic-based low molecular weight compounds, selected from isocyanuric acid-derived (meth)acrylates, pentaerythritol-derived (meth)acrylates or bisphenol A-derived (meth)acrylates, which are crystalline or waxy at room temperature (20-25°C),

(2) urethane (meth)acrylate resins of molecular weight 10,000 or greater which are solid at room temperature (20-25°C), and

(3) the following resins having a molecular weight of 1000 or greater which are solid at room temperature (20-25°C): phenol-novolac epoxy (meth)acrylate resins, cresol-novolac epoxy (meth)acrylate resins and bisphenol A epoxy di(meth)acrylate resins.

6. (Original) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 5, wherein the surface protecting layer further contains a free-radical polymerization initiator.

7. (Previously Presented) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 3, wherein the surface protecting layer contains at least one cationically polymerizable compound having two or more cationically polymerizable groups in the molecule, the cationically polymerizable compounds being selected from the group consisting of:

(1) epoxy-based low molecular compounds, selected from hydroquinone diglycidyl ether or diglycidyl terephthalate, which are crystalline or waxy at room temperature (20-25°C), and

(2) phenol-novolac epoxy resins, cresol-novolac epoxy resins and bisphenol A epoxy resins of molecular weight 1000 or greater which are solid at room temperature.

8. (Original) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 7, wherein the surface protecting layer further contains a cationic polymerization initiator.

9. (Previously Presented) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 4, wherein the surface protecting layer contains at least one type of a free-radical polymerizable compound having two or more ethylenically unsaturated moieties in the molecule, the free-radical polymerizable compounds being selected from the group consisting of:

(1) (meth)acrylic-based low molecular weight compounds, selected from isocyanuric acid-derived (meth)acrylates, pentaerythritol-derived (meth)acrylates or bisphenol A-derived (meth)acrylates, which are crystalline or waxy at room temperature (20-25°C),

(2) urethane (meth)acrylate resins of molecular weight 10,000 or greater which are solid at room temperature (20-25°C), and

(3) the following resins having a molecular weight of 1000 or greater which are solid at room temperature (20-25°C): phenol-novolac epoxy (meth)acrylate resins, cresol-novolac epoxy (meth)acrylate resins and bisphenol A epoxy di(meth)acrylate resins.

10. (Previously Presented) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 9, wherein the surface protecting layer further contains a free-radical polymerization initiator.

11. (Previously Presented) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 4, wherein the surface protecting layer contains at least one cationically polymerizable compound having two or more cationically polymerizable groups in the molecule, the cationically polymerizable compounds being selected from the group consisting of:

(1) epoxy-based low molecular compounds, selected from hydroquinone diglycidyl ether or diglycidyl terephthalate, which are crystalline or waxy at room temperature (20-25°C), and

(2) phenol-novolac epoxy resins, cresol-novolac epoxy resins and bisphenol A epoxy resins of molecular weight 1000 or greater which are solid at room temperature.

12. (Previously Presented) A surface protecting sheet according to claim 11, wherein the surface protecting layer further contains a cationic polymerization initiator.